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Fifteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1765 (2007), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) until 15 January 2008, and requested me to report on progress achieved in implementing the key tasks set out in the Ouagadougou political Agreement of 4 March 2007. The present report provides an update on major developments in Côte d'Ivoire since my report of 1 October 2007 (S/2007/593).

II. Security situation

2. The overall security situation in Côte d'Ivoire continued to improve during the period under review, largely owing to the favourable political atmosphere engendered by the Ouagadougou Agreement. The national armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the armed forces of the Forces nouvelles have demonstrated an increasing willingness to collaborate, providing security for important confidence-building events, such as the visit of the Prime Minister, Guillaume Soro, to the presidential stronghold of Gagnoa on 20 October, and that of the President, Laurent Gbagbo, to the northern part of the country from 28 to 30 November. Furthermore, since the establishment of the green line on 15 September, no violation of the former zone of confidence has been recorded, nor have the two forces changed their postures. The overall risk of a resumption of hostilities between the defence and security forces of Côte d'Ivoire and the Forces nouvelles is therefore assessed as low.

3. Nevertheless, systemic factors of instability, in particular the lack of significant progress towards unification of the defence and security forces and the dismantling and disarmament of the militias in the western part of the country, continue to represent a potential threat to the future of the peace process. In addition, criminality is on the rise in several areas of Côte d'Ivoire, linked in particular to the prevalence of weapons throughout the country. Furthermore, although the leadership of the Forces nouvelles and of the national armed forces agreed to reduce the number of checkpoints so as to facilitate the movement of people and goods, frequent incidents of extortion and denial of freedom of movement perpetrated by elements of those armed forces continued to be reported.

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4. In the western part of the country, which remains the most volatile, the security situation improved somewhat during the reporting period as the Ivorian mixed police units continued to maintain law and order, with the support of United Nations police officers, in particular in the former zone of confidence. However, logistical and financial constraints continued to impede the operations of the mixed police units. The mixed unit deployed in Bangolo blocked the Bangolo-Duékoué axis on 14 and 17 November to protest against poor conditions of service. The incident remained localized and was expeditiously resolved by the integrated command centre.

5. As the disarmament and dismantling of militias stalled, disgruntled militia groups made increasingly belligerent demands for safety net packages and food allowances. In Bouaké on 18 December some 120 disgruntled elements of the Forces nouvelles, who were protesting against the non-payment of their allowances, hijacked private vehicles and attacked several stores in the city. However, the incident was quickly resolved by the leadership of the Forces nouvelles.

6. UNOCI troops continued to conduct patrols throughout the country to monitor the security situation and along the borders with Guinea and Liberia to prevent cross-border movements of weapons or armed groups. UNOCI and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) also carried out concurrent patrols, and the contiguous contingents of the missions held regular coordination and information-sharing meetings on both sides of the border.

7. In response to the request made by President Gbagbo that the United Nations facilitate the establishment of an independent international inquiry into the attack of 29 June on the plane carrying Prime Minister Soro, I dispatched an exploratory mission to Côte d'Ivoire from 1 to 6 October to develop carefully considered and realistic options. The mission made clear to the Ivorian authorities that the establishment of an international commission of inquiry of a judicial nature would require a mandate from the Security Council and explored several options which could be considered in response to the President's request. I have sent separate communications to President Gbagbo and the Security Council on this delicate subject.

III. Political developments

8. The political atmosphere in Côte d'Ivoire remained generally positive during the reporting period, with all Ivorian parties continuing to support the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement and seeking consensual approaches to resolving emerging challenges. In this context, President Gbagbo undertook a three-day visit to the north of the country, from 28 to 30 November, including to Ferkessédougou, the hometown of the Prime Minister. Large crowds gathered at public meetings to hear the President's message that the war was over and the country had been reunited. Efforts towards reconciliation were also reflected in the Prime Minister's visit, on 20 October, to Gagnoa, the hometown of the President. Those gestures contributed to the improvement of the political atmosphere in Côte d'Ivoire, in particular after the period of mistrust that followed the attack of 29 June against the aircraft carrying the Prime Minister.

9. The partnership between President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Soro, and their resolve to move forward the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement,

helped the two signatory parties overcome new challenges, such as the selection of the technical operator and the modus operandi for the identification of the Ivorian population. Those two issues were at the heart of a new round of talks between the presidential delegation and that of the Forces nouvelles, convened in Ouagadougou from 19 to 24 November by the facilitator, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, aimed at securing an agreement on new timelines for implementing the Ouagadougou Agreement. The negotiating teams reached an impasse on 22 November, which prompted the direct involvement of President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Soro. The two leaders reached a compromise and, on 28 November, signed two agreements supplementary to the Ouagadougou Agreement. The first of these — the second supplementary agreement — designated the technical operator for the identification of the population. The other — the third supplementary agreement — set out new timelines for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement (the first supplementary agreement, which designated Guillaume Soro as the Prime Minister, had been signed on 27 March 2007).

10. The Prime Minister continued to consult with representatives of the opposition parties on moving the peace process forward and to assure them of the Government's commitment to the full implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement, including the holding of credible elections. He also worked to expand political participation by soliciting views from women and from youth organizations affiliated with the signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement on the best way to advance the peace process.

11. The country's relations with international partners continued to improve, with visits from the Deputy Secretary of State of the United States of America, John Negroponte, the European Union Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, the Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Pierre Chevalier, and the Minister for Defence of France, Hervé Morin. The progress made in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement was also discussed during a meeting between Presidents Gbagbo, Compaoré and Sarkozy on the margins of the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon. Furthermore, in an act of good neighbourliness consistent with existing regulations, on 9 November President Gbagbo signed an ordinance abolishing the requirement for nationals of countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) living in Côte d'Ivoire to carry residence permits.

12. Following his arrival in Abidjan on 20 November, my new Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Choi Young-Jin, met with all the Ivorian political leaders and other national stakeholders. All interlocutors emphasized the importance of his role in the certification of all stages of the electoral process. Mr. Choi also travelled to Burkina Faso and Ghana for consultations with the facilitator and with the Chairman of the African Union, President Kufuor, with whom he discussed the support needed from the international community to keep the Ouagadougou Agreement on track and ensure the inclusiveness of the peace process.

IV. Status of implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement

13. In my previous report, I observed that implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement, which had had an encouraging beginning, had started to encounter

serious delays. However, the signing of the two supplementary agreements referred to in paragraph 9 above gave new impetus to the peace process.

14. The second supplementary agreement endorses the 9 November decision of the Evaluation and Monitoring Committee that the French company SAGEM should serve as the technical operator for the identification process, a proposal welcomed by both former President Bédié and former Prime Minister Ouattara. The third supplementary agreement set out new timelines for the completion of the tasks outstanding under the Ouagadougou Agreement, as follows: the adoption of a structure for the new national armed forces by 15 December; the launching of the process of the disarmament and dismantling of militias, the cantonment of former combatants and the storage of their weapons under the supervision of the impartial forces, and recruitment for the national civic service, as from 22 December; the completion of the redeployment of the fiscal and customs administration throughout the country by 30 December; and the holding of presidential elections by June 2008. The parties agreed to leave the decision on quotas and military ranks of Forces nouvelles elements to be integrated into the unified national army to the facilitator for arbitration.

15. The third supplementary agreement also envisaged the payment of monthly allowances to personnel of the armed forces of the Forces nouvelles and the retroactive payment of salaries owed to former personnel of the defence and security forces of Côte d'Ivoire who had joined the Forces nouvelles, until their reintegration into the new national armed forces or into civilian society. Moreover, the signatories were expected to formalize their earlier agreement to hold weekly meetings with the special representative of the facilitator, Boureima Badini.

A. Establishment of the integrated command centre

16. During the period under review, the integrated command centre, which is responsible for implementing critical military and security aspects of the Ouagadougou Agreement, moved into its permanent headquarters in Yamoussoukro. The integrated command centre comprises seven mixed cells and four support platoons and is currently manned by 120 Government and 51 Forces nouvelles military personnel. The performance of the command centre has improved, owing in part to the logistical and technical support provided by UNOCI. However, the centre continued to face difficulties in fulfilling its mandate as a result of financial constraints and its limited planning and operational capacities. Lack of adequate communication and transport assets also presented serious challenges. Furthermore, in the absence of an agreement on the numbers of Forces nouvelles elements to be integrated into the national army, Forces nouvelles elements deployed within the integrated command centre have not received salaries.

B. Deployment of mixed units and the gradual lifting of the green line

17. Although the integrated command centre has deployed six mixed police units in the former zone of confidence, the composition of the units at Famienkro and Kokpingué in the east remained incomplete owing to the absence of Forces nouvelles elements. To date, the mixed units include 60 defence and security forces and 40 Forces nouvelles elements, of an envisaged total of 120 personnel. None of

the six Ivorian paramedics who are to be part of the mixed units has been posted. Three mixed military units comprising a total of 100 troops, including 70 from the Forces nouvelles, of a planned strength of 222 personnel, have been partly deployed to support the police units. However, neither Government nor Forces nouvelles elements deployed by the integrated command centre have received regular allowances. The delay in the payment of allowances and salaries contributed to demonstrations by the mixed unit in Bangolo in November and sporadic acts of extortion targeting the civilian population. In addition, both mixed brigades and military support units lack adequate communications, logistical and transportation capacities.

18. In my previous report, I noted that UNOCI had dismantled its checkpoints and established 17 observation posts along the green line as at 15 September. Pursuant to the Ouagadougou Agreement, according to which the mission was to halve the number of observation posts every two months, UNOCI decided to remove eight observation posts between 30 November and 18 December. The gradual removal of the remaining nine posts will be based on further threat assessments and consultations with the integrated command centre and depend on overall progress made in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement.

C. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

19. Prior to the signing of the third supplementary agreement, the start of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme continued to be delayed, ostensibly owing to the lack of agreement on the ranks of the Forces nouvelles elements expected to join the new army. Coordination among various partners also remained problematic, partly because of difficulties in establishing lead responsibilities for the process among the integrated command centre — which, under the Ouagadougou Agreement, is responsible for disarmament and demobilization — the national reintegration and community rehabilitation programme, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff of the two forces, which maintain control of the decision-making process. In this context, little progress was made in adapting the existing concept of operations for the disarmament programme to the new context created by the Ouagadougou Agreement, in particular in relation to the wider restructuring of the armed forces. Similarly, progress on key operational issues, such as the linkages between the reintegration of ex-combatants and the civic service and the establishment of lists of combatants to be disarmed, was lacking. Because of the delay in the launch of the disarmament programme and the lack of clarity on the way forward, donors generally delayed the disbursement of financial support for the disarmament programme.

20. In order to address those constraints, in November UNOCI and the United Nations Development Programme convened a workshop on institutional development at the integrated command centre headquarters in Yamoussoukro, following which the centre formulated operational frameworks for its seven cells, namely, disarmament, logistics, communications, human resources, restructuring and reunification of the army, operations and civilian and military actions. The workshop also helped to foster better coordination between the integrated command centre and the national reintegration and community rehabilitation programme and delineate their respective responsibilities.

21. In anticipation of the launching of the civic service programme, which the Government had indicated would be used to reintegrate a large number of ex-combatants, the Prime Minister's office convened a workshop in October to define the eligibility criteria and modalities for its implementation. It was agreed that the primary objective of the programme was to provide opportunities for young people, former combatants and militia elements to reintegrate into society through volunteer activities, civic education and military and vocational training. The workshop did not provide clarity on oversight responsibilities, budgetary implications or funding sources for the programme. On 21 December, however, the Government announced the launch of the civic service programme.

22. The third supplementary agreement gave notable impetus to the process. Under the agreement, the cantonment of national armed forces and Forces nouvelles elements and the storage of their weapons under the supervision of the impartial forces was scheduled to begin by 22 December, concurrently with the dismantling of militias. Recruitment into the national civic service was also scheduled to begin no later than 22 December. On 10 December, the Prime Minister convened a meeting to launch the process of implementing the provisions of the agreement relating to security and, in particular, instructed the Chiefs of Staff of the defence and security forces of Côte d'Ivoire, General Mangou, and of the Forces nouvelles, General Bakayoko, to develop procedures for the cantonment of ex-combatants, the storage of weapons and the dismantling of militias.

23. The two Chiefs of Staff met on 14 and 17 December at the integrated command centre in Yamoussoukro in the presence of the Force Commanders of UNOCI and the French Licorne force, the coordinator of the Programme national pour la réinsertion et la réhabilitation communautaire and the special representative of the facilitator. In line with the third supplementary agreement, by which the Ivorian parties entrusted the facilitator with the task of determining the quotas of Forces nouvelles elements to be reintegrated, the special representative announced that 5,000 elements of the Forces nouvelles would be integrated into the new army, 4,000 would join the national police and gendarmerie, 20,000 would join the civic service and 6,000 would benefit from reintegration programmes developed in the context of the Programme national pour la réinsertion et la réhabilitation communautaire. The Chiefs of Staff subsequently endorsed a proposal developed by the integrated command centre regarding the cantonment of ex-combatants. The integrated command centre will lead the operation, in particular the registration of former combatants and weapons surrendered, under the supervision of the impartial forces — UNOCI and Licorne — which will also provide security for the weapons and ammunitions surrendered and destroy the unserviceable weapons.

24. On 22 December, President Gbagbo, accompanied by Prime Minister Soro, presided over a ceremony marking the launch of the cantonment process in Tiébissou and Djébonoua, on either side of the former zone of confidence. The President and the Prime Minister gave assurances that necessary measures would be taken so that all combatants would either be integrated into the unified army, join the civic service or take part in reintegration programmes. The ceremony culminated in three national armed forces and two Forces nouvelles platoons proceeding to their cantonment site in Yamoussoukro, and six Forces nouvelles platoons moving to their cantonment site in Bouaké.

25. With a view to launching the exercise as soon as possible, an immediate review of the sites needed for the cantonment was conducted. UNOCI has completed the construction of three cantonment sites in Kani, Ferkessédougou and Odienné in the north, and the construction of a fourth site, in Ouangolodougou, is ongoing. In the meantime, the Programme national pour la réinsertion et la réhabilitation communautaire was requested to prepare for the absorption of Forces nouvelles elements into reintegration programmes by the end of 2007, but it lacks the required financial capacity, in particular because of the withholding of funds by key donors concerned about transparency and accountability.

D. Disarmament and dismantling of militias

26. During the period under review, the disarmament and dismantling of militias operation was delayed owing to the absence of an agreement on the reintegration arrangements. Militia leaders and military governors from the west of the country continued to claim the payment of safety net packages for the 1,019 militia members who have not yet been disarmed, while refusing to agree to the weapons-to-combatant ratio proposed by the impartial forces and the national institution responsible for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

27. The revised timelines set out in the third agreement supplementary to the Ouagadougou Agreement provided for the dismantling of militias to begin by 22 December. During the 17 December meeting of the Chiefs of Staff of the defence and security forces and the Forces nouvelles (see para. 23 above), it was agreed that the payment of safety net allowances would be discontinued. Militia groups will be expected to regroup in sites that have been refurbished by UNOCI. They will subsequently be disarmed and dismantled and their members will be provided with reintegration opportunities through the civic service and programmes developed by the Programme national pour la réinsertion et la réhabilitation communautaire. Those unable to immediately benefit from these opportunities will be given a fixed allowance to return to their communities, pending their inclusion in reintegration programmes. The Chiefs of Staff also agreed to propose that a deadline be set for militia groups to report to the disarmament sites voluntarily, after which the use of force would be considered.

E. Unification of the defence and security forces

28. Pursuant to the third supplementary agreement, the overall framework on the organization, composition and functioning of the reunified armed forces of Côte d'Ivoire should have been adopted by the Government by 15 December. On 10 December, the Prime Minister announced that a working group would be established to propose measures for the restructuring and reorganization of the new defence and security forces. Little progress had been made in that regard by 24 December, pending the resolution of the issue of the ranks and number of Forces nouvelles personnel to be integrated into the unified armed forces, a task that has been entrusted to the facilitator. However, the determination by the facilitator of the number of Forces nouvelles elements to be integrated into the army, the national police and gendarmerie, the civic service and other reintegration programmes, which was announced by his special representative on 17 December, constitutes a welcome development in that regard.

F. Restoration of State administration

29. Some progress was made during the period under review with respect to the redeployment of State administration throughout the country. All 22 préfets of regions and departments, 27 secretaries-general of the prefectures and 107 sous-préfets have been deployed to their respective areas of responsibility in the north, the centre and the south. The national committee for the redeployment of the administration announced in November that the installation of the préfets, secretaries-general of prefectures and sous-préfets in Ferkessédougou marked the completion of the redeployment of State administrators in the area controlled by the Forces nouvelles. During the same period, however, no progress was made in redeploying the judiciary to the north of the country. Furthermore, the law enforcement and penitentiary personnel required to support the judiciary have not been redeployed. Altogether, according to the national committee, of the 24,437 civil servants who were displaced during the crisis, some 15,000 had returned to their posts in the north and west as at 24 December 2007. Budgetary and logistical shortcomings continued to hamper the effective functioning of the newly redeployed administration, however, and the national committee estimates that an additional $10 million will be required to provide incentives to the civil servants who remain displaced.

30. In mid-December, the national committee observed that the completion of the redeployment of the fiscal and customs administrations by the end of December, as required by the third supplementary agreement, presented a significant challenge, particularly in view of the difficulties experienced by the administrators already redeployed. It is also worth noting that, while Forces nouvelles commanders have expressed a willingness to transfer their administrative and financial authority to the administrators redeployed in the areas under their control, as long as their command structures remain intact, the existence of such parallel authority structures may create unnecessary tensions.

31. Since the beginning of the school year in September, teachers in many parts of the country have been on strike to demand improved conditions of service. The action has generated widespread and frequent demonstrations by students protesting the continued absence of teachers from their schools. The situation might improve as a result of reopening in November of financial services in the north, in particular in Bouaké and Korhogo, which will facilitate the payment of salaries and pensions to current and retired civil servants in that part of the country.

G. Identification of the population and elections

32. A total of 111 mobile courts were planned to conduct the process of the identification of the Ivorian population, which started on 25 September. In all, 55 technical teams had been deployed as at 24 December, of which only 33 were operational. Also, as at that date, a total of 93,027 duplicate birth certificates had been granted by the mobile courts nationwide. With the noticeable exception of an incident in Bouaké on 18 December, in which judges serving in the mobile courts teams were attacked by Forces nouvelles elements who were protesting against the non-payment of their allowances, the mobile courts operations have progressed without any major security incidents.

33. The geographical coverage of the mobile teams, however, has been limited to 47 of the 727 communes of Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, turnout was relatively low in the first weeks of the process, partly owing to the failure by the Government to sensitize the population. Political parties have expressed concerns in that regard. Moreover, in some parts of the country, logistical and other difficulties hindered the timely payment of allowances to technical teams and security personnel deployed by the integrated command centre and contributed to the temporary suspension of some mobile courts operations.

34. On 14 November, the Prime Minister provided an explanation for the delays in the expansion of the number of mobile courts throughout the country, citing the lack of financial resources. He indicated that the Government was facing a shortfall of $8 million to fund the identification process. On 19 November, the Government released $2 million to support the deployment of additional teams for the conduct of the work of the mobile courts, which enabled the number of mobile courts deployed throughout the country to be increased by eight.

35. The third supplementary agreement also provided for the reconstitution of civil registers that had been lost or destroyed during the conflict to begin by the end of December 2007. A modus operandi has been proposed by the Minister for Justice and, consistent with an agreement reached by the two signatories to the third supplementary agreement, the reconstitution process is now scheduled to take place concomitantly with the mobile courts operations and the identification of the Ivorian population. Also during the reporting period, and at the request of the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, ECOWAS dispatched an exploratory mission to Côte d'Ivoire in the first week of November to determine ways in which the regional body could support the Government in preparing for the elections.

H. Voter registration

36. The designation in the second supplementary agreement of SAGEM as technical operator for the identification process should enable the Government to expedite the process, once a consensual modus operandi for identification and the establishment of the voter rolls has been finalized. The technical operator will work in collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics and will assist the Independent Electoral Commission during the voter registration exercise expected to be conducted at 11,000 enrolment centres throughout the country. The launch of the process will require the completion of key outstanding tasks, including the definition of the procedures for registration and the establishment of the Electoral Commission's structures at the departmental, sub-prefectoral and communal levels, once political parties have appointed their representatives.

37. In the meantime, consistent with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1765 (2007), UNOCI has established a small certification support cell to assist my Special Representative in fulfilling his certification mandate. In addition, the certification support cell is developing criteria and benchmarks for the conduct of the certification exercise, which will be agreed upon with the facilitator in consultation with other partners.

I. Financial support for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement

38. It will be recalled that, in June, international partners of Côte d'Ivoire pledged approximately $388 million in support of the Ouagadougou Agreement and post-conflict recovery, of which $28 million has already been accounted for in the basket fund established in October by the United Nations Development Programme as one of the disbursement mechanisms of the Government's recovery programme. Some $186 million was also pledged by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and donors to finance the identification and elections processes, which nevertheless face significant shortfalls that could undermine the ability of the Ivorian people to stage credible elections. In view of the recently renewed momentum in the peace process, the disbursement of additional funds is urgently required, in particular to complete the key tasks of disarmament and identification.

V. Deployment of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

A. Military component

39. As at 24 December, the military strength of UNOCI stood at 8,033 personnel, comprising 7,747 troops, 195 military observers and 91 staff officers, against a total authorized strength of 8,115. Of the mission's 11 battalions, 5 have been deployed in the western part of the country, 4 in the east and 2 in Abidjan. One aviation unit, three engineering companies, one transport company and one special force company are providing enabling capacity and operational reserve to the force. The Sous-Groupement de sécurité, which comprises 279 personnel, provides close protection for members of the Government and other dignitaries.

40. The redeployment of UNOCI forces from the former zone of confidence is ongoing, in accordance with resolution 1765 (2007) and the relevant provisions of the Ouagadougou Agreement. On the basis of the threat assessment conducted by UNOCI, the force would be spread throughout the country to better support the integrated command centre in providing security for the processes of the redeployment of State administration, the identification of the population, the disarmament and dismantling of militias, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and preparations for the elections. In order to increase the mobility of the troops, UNOCI will reduce the number of its camps from 44 to 24. Six camps have already been dismantled and 18 more are expected to be vacated in early 2008, while 4 new camps will be established at Divo and Issia in the west, Dabakala in the north and Adzope, near Abidjan, in the south.

41. Despite the reduction of its troop strength in May and August 2007, the Licorne force continues to maintain its full quick-reaction capacity to support UNOCI in keeping with the protocol signed by UNOCI and Licorne force commanders in December 2005. During his visit to Côte d'Ivoire on 5 and 6 December 2007, the Minister for Defence of France reaffirmed his country's commitment to maintaining its force in the country in fulfilment of the Security Council mandate.

B. Police component

42. As at 24 December, 1,127 police personnel — 377 police officers and 750 personnel in formed police units — of an authorized strength of 1,200 were deployed in 26 locations throughout the country. The six formed police units are deployed in Abidjan (2), Yamoussoukro, Bouaké, Guiglo and Daloa. Initial plans to move a formed police unit from Abidjan to Boundiali, in the northern part of the country, were revisited by UNOCI as part of its redeployment exercise but abandoned, as military personnel will provide security to a new police station in that town.

43. During the reporting period, the Operation's police component continued to provide advice and training to the national police and gendarmerie in the Government-controlled areas. United Nations police officers also continued to provide support, advice and mentoring to the 600 police auxiliaries who were trained by UNOCI and deployed in 54 police stations in the northern part of the country, thereby contributing to reducing insecurity there. In addition, United Nations police officers continued to conduct mixed patrols, which contributed to rebuilding confidence between policing institutions and the Ivorian population, and to provide support to the six mixed police units deployed along the green line in their daily activities. UNOCI police officers also provided assistance to national authorities in support of the redeployment of State administration to the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire, the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of origin and the conduct of the mobile courts operations for the identification of the Ivorian population.

44. In the light of the third agreement supplementary to the Ouagadougou Agreement, the UNOCI police component intends to assist the integrated command centre in conducting an assessment of the needs of the Ivorian police and gendarmerie in the context of the envisaged reform of the Ivorian security sector.

VI. Human rights and the rule of law

A. Human rights situation

45. While no deterioration in the human rights situation was observed during the reporting period, the mission continued to receive regular reports of abuses inflicted on civilians by defence and security forces and elements of the Forces nouvelles, including intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and racketeering at checkpoints. Moreover, a surge in crime in urban areas and along highways undermined the right of civilians to security and freedom of movement.

46. UNOCI continued to monitor and investigate human rights violations, including violent inter-ethnic clashes in the west, summary executions committed by police and gendarmerie units in the south and acts of ill-treatment, including torture, committed by Forces nouvelles elements and Dozo traditional hunters in the north. Intercommunity tensions in the Bouaké, Bafing and San-Pédro regions and in the west of the country contributed to targeted killings, the destruction of property and theft of cattle. In the western part of the country, recurrent tensions between returning internally displaced persons and communities of return threatened social cohesion, as the returnees faced misunderstanding, exclusion and denial of access to

land and other resources. To prevent the escalation of hostilities and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts, UNOCI, in cooperation with the protection monitoring team established by the humanitarian community, carried out grass-roots advocacy interventions in Kouan-Houlé, Duékoué and Diabo and the Moyen-Cavally region.

47. UNOCI also promoted human rights through training and working sessions with traditional and security authorities, as well as members of national human rights organizations. To date, more than 53 human rights clubs have been established in schools throughout the country. The establishment of human rights clubs is an initiative undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and with the support of national non-governmental human rights organizations.

B. Child protection

48. UNOCI continued to advocate for the consideration of the rights of the child in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement. The prevalence of sexual violence against children, particularly girls, is a serious concern. In that regard, the United Nations system in Côte d'Ivoire is working closely with the Government in the preparation of a national plan of action to combat sexual and gender-based violence. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the United Nations system also collaborates closely to monitor and document violations against children and to conduct community-level sensitization initiatives in an effort to prevent violations. In this regard, both the Forces nouvelles and militia groups continued to fully cooperate with the efforts of UNOCI to monitor and verify compliance with their respective action plans on ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers. UNOCI also continued its efforts to assist the Government in bringing Ivorian laws regarding juvenile justice into conformity with international standards on the rights of the child. In this regard, UNOCI, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Ministry of Justice convened a round table for judicial personnel and civil society representatives that resulted in the elaboration of several recommendations for the Government's consideration.

C. Judicial and corrections systems

49. UNOCI is assisting the Government in its efforts to secure bilateral funding for the rehabilitation of nine prison facilities in the part of the country controlled by the Forces nouvelles that were seriously damaged or neglected during the conflict. On 8 November, President Gbagbo signed a decree that raises the minimum recruitment requirements of prison personnel following six strike actions initiated by their union since 2000 to demand salaries and conditions of service on a par with the police and other agencies. As the new standards have implications for recruiting and training adequate prison staff, there is a need to expedite the opening of the judicial training institute that was formally created in 2005.

VII. Humanitarian situation

50. During the reporting period, the spontaneous return of displaced persons intensified, particularly in the west and north of the country. Of the humanitarian caseload of 120,000 persons, approximately 50,000 have returned. Together with relevant Government ministries, local authorities and non-governmental organizations, the United Nations humanitarian agencies developed a common strategy for providing mid- to long-term assistance to returnees. A total of $2.5 million allocated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator from the Central Emergency Response Fund for humanitarian activities in Côte d'Ivoire will be channelled towards activities that assist in the return process.

51. From 27 to 29 November, the Humanitarian Coordinator led a second humanitarian mission, comprising representatives of the United Nations country team, non-governmental organizations and the donor community, to the western part of the country to evaluate progress in meeting the needs of returnees. The mission met with local and traditional authorities and members of the mixed police unit with a view to obtaining updated information on the assistance and protection needs of displaced persons in the priority regions of Moyen-Cavally and Montagnes. The mission also examined ways to develop complementarities between humanitarian action and early recovery and development activities.

VIII. Economic recovery

52. Economic growth in Côte d'Ivoire is forecast to rise from 1.7 per cent in 2007 to 3 per cent in 2008 owing to expected gains from increased production in the cocoa and oil sectors. While consumer price inflation remained near 2.5 per cent in the period 2004 to 2006 and is expected to remain below 3 per cent through 2009, recent increases in food prices have contributed to social unrest in Abidjan. The poverty rate increased from approximately 38 per cent at the beginning of the crisis to an estimated 43.2 per cent in 2006.

53. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank undertook an assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire in November to further support the Government in developing its economic recovery and reform programme. The World Bank, which provided a grant of $120 million for the post-conflict recovery programme, has been assisting the Government in its efforts to clear its arrears by early 2008 to facilitate the launch of a full Bank programme valued at some $194 million. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund, which disbursed the first $60 million tranche of its emergency post-conflict assistance to Côte d'Ivoire in August, conducted a review of the programme that will allow for the disbursement of the second $60 million tranche in early 2008, if approved by its board.

54. The Government faces tight fiscal constraints because of increasing demands from civil servants for the payment of salary and allowance arrears and the costly post-conflict recovery programme. While budget execution has generally remained in line with the overall envelope, priority has not been given to social and rehabilitation expenditures, as had been agreed. At the same time, considerable progress has been made in terms of structural reforms in the key areas of public finance and the cocoa, energy and finance sectors.

IX. Media monitoring and public information

55. UNOCI continued its efforts to promote a positive media environment and to monitor the activities of the print and broadcast media. On 11 December, Radio ONUCI-FM was granted the International Children's Day of Broadcasting award for radio excellence. The Ivorian media, by and large, have reflected the positive political atmosphere, with the exception of attacks targeting the United Nations following the adoption of resolution 1782 (2007) extending the sanctions regime. During the reporting period, a number of incidents threatened the generally positive media environment that has prevailed since the signing of the Ouagadougou Agreement, including a recent trend towards increasingly hostile reporting with xenophobic undertones and the prosecution of four journalists writing for the opposition media who had published articles critical of the leadership. Also of concern is the erosion of the authority of regulatory bodies that monitor media coverage of the activities of political parties.

X. Gender

56. The UNOCI gender unit continued to promote gender mainstreaming in the mission's activities and, together with the United Nations country team, provided capacity-building assistance to national women's organizations. In accordance with resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, UNOCI assisted the Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Family in preparing a national action plan on the implementation of the resolution that is focused on ensuring the full political participation of women in the peace process. The mission also assisted the Ministry in implementing a nationwide sensitization campaign from 25 November to 10 December 2007 to end impunity for gender-based violence.

XI. HIV/AIDS

57. UNOCI continued to enhance HIV/AIDS awareness in the mission's activities. Since my October report, 2,924 UNOCI personnel have participated in HIV/AIDS awareness training and 268 peer educators have been trained to conduct sensitization activities within their respective battalions. Voluntary counselling and testing services have also been provided to 1,983 mission personnel. In the context of a project jointly conducted by UNOCI and the United Nations Population Fund, 7,721 members of communities surrounding UNOCI installations have been sensitized on HIV/AIDS awareness and behaviour change.

XII. Personnel conduct and discipline

58. In my previous report, I referred to allegations of widespread sexual exploitation and abuse by UNOCI military personnel stationed in the Bouaké area. During the period under review, the troop-contributing country concerned and the United Nations continued to conduct investigations into the allegations, with the contribution and assistance of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, the contingent concerned was redeployed from Bouaké to Duékoué, in the western part of the country.

59. UNOCI continues to work towards full compliance with my zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. As at 24 December, 6,173 UNOCI personnel, consisting of 3,161 military, 2,465 civilian and 547 police personnel, have received mandatory training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. A number of measures, such as restriction of off-duty personnel to barracks, mobile patrols to monitor unauthorized exits from camps, and group recreational activities, were implemented by the mission in response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving military personnel based in Abidjan. The camp of the contingent concerned was subsequently assessed to ensure that the measures had been implemented. The mission's conduct and discipline unit and the Force Provost Marshal's assessment of the camps of other military contingents found that all recommended measures aimed at eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse had been implemented.

XIII. Mission support

60. Administrative support for the mission has expanded considerably throughout the country to assist in the ongoing process of deploying additional civilian personnel in the regions. A major challenge included the provision of critical infrastructures to sustain UNOCI installations, particularly in view of the redeployment of UNOCI troops from the former zone of confidence and the need to vacate current installations to facilitate the further redeployment of State administrators. With a view to strengthening inter-mission cooperation, particularly through efficient sharing of logistical, administrative and personnel resources, UNOCI, UNMIL, the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone and the United Nations Office for West Africa held a regional administrative conference in Monrovia in November.

XIV. Financial implications

61. The General Assembly, by its resolution 61/247 B, appropriated $470.8 million for the maintenance of UNOCI for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOCI beyond 15 January 2008, the cost of maintaining the mission until 30 June 2008 would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly.

62. As at 30 September 2007, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNOCI amounted to $166.8 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $2,785.7 million. Reimbursement of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs has been made for the period up to 30 September 2007 and 30 November 2007, respectively.

XV. Observations

63. The signing on 28 November of the two agreements supplementary to the Ouagadougou Agreement should provide new impetus to the implementation of the Agreement. The direct involvement of President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Soro in resolving the key issues that had stalled the process demonstrated once again the

value of their partnership, as well as the importance of a consensual approach and Ivorian ownership of the peace process.

64. The new timelines set out in the supplementary agreements are still very ambitious and will require the parties and their international partners to redouble their efforts in putting in place practical arrangements and financial resources, especially for the key processes, including the identification of the population, voter registration, the disarmament process, the reunification of the armed forces and the re-establishment of State authority.

65. The conduct of credible, free, fair and transparent elections will be crucial for the return of lasting peace to Côte d'Ivoire. In this regard, I have noted the Ivorian parties' determination to hold elections as soon as possible. I am also cognizant of the technical processes that have to be completed before the elections can be held, as set out by the Independent Electoral Commission, as well as the tasks emanating from the Ouagadougou Agreement, which are essential for the creation of a political and security atmosphere conducive to credible free and fair elections. In this regard, it should be noted that in Côte d'Ivoire the United Nations will not itself organize the elections, as it has done in other countries, but assume a supporting role. Progress thus depends on the will and determination of the Ivorian leaders. The decision to hold early elections therefore imposes a special responsibility on the Ivorian parties, both to meet the technical requirements and to create a favourable political and security atmosphere for the elections. In keeping with his mandate, my Special Representative will conduct the certification of all stages of the electoral process in an impartial manner, in consultation with the parties, the facilitator and concerned international partners.

66. The inclusiveness of the peace process is also a critical factor for its success. In that regard, I am pleased to note the efforts undertaken by the President and the Prime Minister to consult with members of the political opposition on the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement, and the intention of the facilitator to convene more frequent meetings of the standing consultative forum to encourage dialogue among the Ivorian stakeholders. Lasting peace and stability in Côte d'Ivoire will also require that all Ivorians fight against impunity, particularly in the case of economic crimes and human rights violations. In this regard, while there are indications that human rights conditions have improved, I remain concerned about continued cases of abuse and other violations, and call on the Ivorian parties to protect the civilian population, particularly women and children.

67. The successful implementation of the peace process will also be facilitated by the continued engagement of international partners, including the United Nations, which remains committed to supporting the Ivorian parties in fully implementing the Ouagadougou Agreement. However, the availability of secure funding is also essential to the completion of the outstanding tasks. I therefore wish to express my appreciation to those donors that have already made available the funds pledged during the conference of 18 July. In view of the renewed commitment of the Ivorian parties to move the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement forward, and the concrete steps recently taken in that regard, I appeal to other donors to make their pledged funds available. It is also important for the international community to remain engaged in supporting the Ivorian parties, as the Ivorian peace process will enter a crucial phase in the first half of 2008. In this regard, I look forward to the international consultative organ established by resolution 1765 (2007) playing a

more proactive role in supporting the Ivorian parties in the implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement, including by providing advice and helping to overcome potential obstacles, in consultation with the facilitator, and maintaining the momentum engendered by the Ouagadougou Agreement.

68. The positive political environment engendered by the Ouagadougou Agreement and the subsequent supplementary agreements could not have been possible without the continued commitment and tireless efforts of the facilitator, President Blaise Compaoré, to promote constructive dialogue and mutual accommodation. I wish to again express my deep appreciation to President Compaoré for his positive role in helping resolve the Ivorian crisis, and reaffirm the continued commitment of the United Nations to supporting his efforts and working closely with him with a view to facilitating the parties' implementation of the Ouagadougou Agreement. At the same time, I call on the Ivorian parties to continue to extend to the facilitator their full cooperation. I also call on the Ivorian parties to extend their full cooperation to my new Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Choi Young-Jin, in particular in the exercise of his mandated certification role.

69. In my October report, I recommended that the Security Council maintain the troop levels of UNOCI, in view of the limited progress on key benchmarks identified in my thirteenth progress report, of 14 May (S/2007/275), namely, the completion of the disarmament and demobilization of combatants, the disarming and dismantling of militias and the restoration of State authority throughout the country. Limited progress was made during the reporting period with respect to both the redeployment of State administration and the disarmament of militias and combatants (see section IV above). The recent developments following the signing of the third supplementary agreement are encouraging and, in due course, might lead to proposals for a gradual downsizing of UNOCI troop levels. I therefore recommend that the mandate of UNOCI be extended for a period of 12 months, until 15 January 2009, and that the current strength of UNOCI be maintained until the benchmarks set out in my thirteenth report are achieved.

70. In conclusion, I would like to welcome my new Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. Choi, who arrived in Abidjan on 20 November 2007 to assume his responsibilities. I would also like to commend the important work done by my Principal Deputy Special Representative, Abou Moussa, who served as Officer-in-Charge of UNOCI for 10 months pending the arrival of Mr. Choi, and all UNOCI military and civilian personnel for their continued commitment to supporting the peace process. I would also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, ECOWAS, the African Union, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, humanitarian organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions on behalf of peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

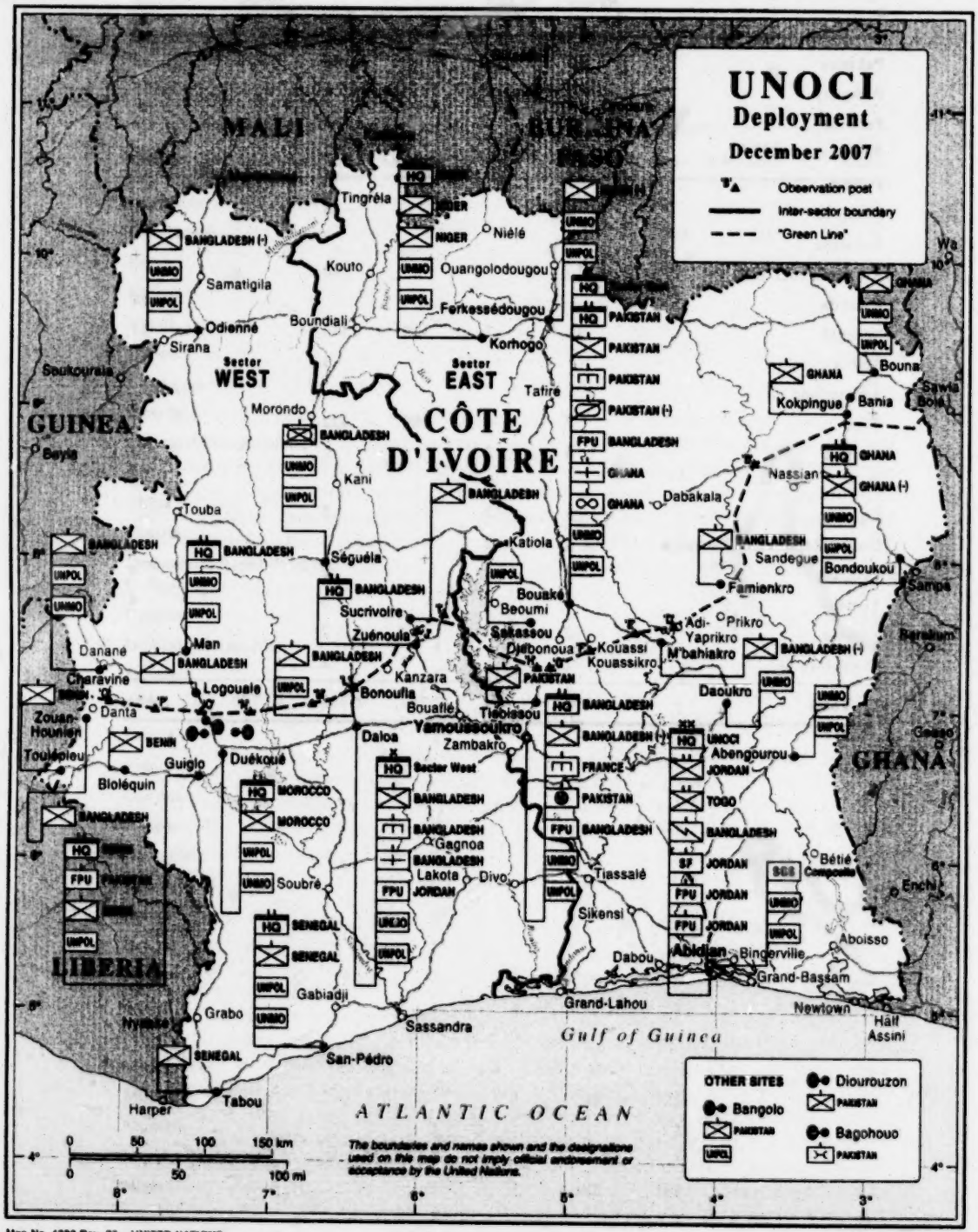
Annex

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

Military and police strength as at 24 December 2007

Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Formed police units*	*Civilian police*
Argentina						3
Bangladesh	12	9	2 708	2 729	250	3
Benin	8	5	420	433		66
Bolivia	3			3		
Brazil	4	3		7		
Burundi						20
Cameroon						61
Canada						4
Central Africa Republic						4
Chad	3			3		9
China	7			7		
Croatia	2			2		
Democratic Republic of the Congo						21
Djibouti						25
Dominican Republic	4			4		
Ecuador	2			2		
El Salvador	3			3		
Ethiopia	2			2		
France	2	12	171	185		10
Gambia	6			6		
Ghana	7	7	534	548		6
Guatemala	5			5		
Guinea	3			3		
India	8			8		2
Ireland	1			1		
Jordan	7	12	1 050	1 069	375	9
Kenya	4	4		8		
Libya						2
Madagascar						13
Morocco		2	723	725		
Namibia	2			2		
Nepal	3			3		
Niger	5	2	382	389		67
Nigeria	7			7		11

Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Formed police units*	*Civilian police*
Pakistan	10	11	1 125	1 146	125	2
Paraguay	2	2		4		
Peru	3			3		
Philippines	4	3		7		4
Poland	2			2		
Moldova	4			4		
Romania	7			7		
Russian Federation	10			10		
Rwanda						14
Senegal	11	7	325	343		77
Serbia	3			3		
Switzerland						2
Togo	7	6	309	322		1
Tunisia	6	2		8		
Turkey						6
Uganda	3	2		5		
United Republic of Tanzania	1	2		3		
Uruguay	2			2		4
Yemen	6			6		4
Zambia	2			2		
Zimbabwe	2			2		
Total	**195**	**91**	**7 747**	**8 033**	**750**	**450**



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